

UK considers increasing aid to Bangladesh

Says British minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

UK Chief Secretary to the Treasury Stephen Timms yesterday said the British government is considering to increase its assistance to Bangladesh through DFID.

He said emphasis will be given for the improvement of primary education, water and sanitation and environmental issues.

The UK minister was talking to newsmen after a brief meeting with Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran at his office.

Timms was on a daylong visit to Sylhet.

Accompanied by British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, he flew to Sylhet Osmani International Airport by a helicopter in the morning.

The mayor welcomed them and took them to city corporation office.

Replying to a question, Timms told The Daily Star that presently the British government provides aid worth about 125 million pounds annually.

"We hope it will be increased in a big way. It may even go up to 200 million pounds," he added.

The minister said the UK has a longstanding relation with Bangladesh.

"We need to strengthen it further in every possible way," he added.

He also hoped that bilateral relations will be further deepened through this visit.

"I am very pleased to be in Sylhet which has a special link with the UK. Although it is my second visit to this city, it has given me a big scope for getting better knowledge about the region and its people," Timms said.

"I have come here to see how we can develop the relation in near future," he added.

During his meeting with the mayor, the British minister enquired about the water supply situation in the city in addition to the state of primary schools and their management.

He also enquired about the situation in health sector especially the state of existing healthcare facilities for the poor.

Besides, he wanted to know about the law and order situation of the district.

The mayor briefed the UK minister on water supply, primary education and waste management situa-

tion in the city and sought assistance for resolving them.

Timms said, "We will think about establishing twinning link between schools in Sylhet and those in the UK."

Besides, programmes for safe motherhood and children can also be taken in addition to improvement of environmental issues and waste management, he added.

The chief treasury secretary also assured of taking measures for the improvement of the medicare and schooling of the poor in Sylhet.

When asked about the trial for grenade attack on him in Sylhet in 2004, Anwar Choudhury said, "We are satisfied with the development. I hope the trial would be completed in five to six months."

Later, the British chief treasury secretary talked to the divisional commissioner and deputy inspector general of police at their offices respectively.

Before leaving Sylhet, he also stayed for some time at the Liaison Office of the British High Commission in the city.

Two criminals arrested with firearm in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

Two criminals with a firearm were arrested by Chittagong Metropolitan Police in separate raids in the city on Sunday night.

In one raid, Bayezid thana police arrested Mohammad Kalam, 22, with a one-barrel gun from Mandar Bil area adjoining to Farhad Colony at around 11:30pm.

In another drive, Double Mooring thana police arrested Ahmed Farid Uddin alias Sajjad, 35, son of late Atiq Ullah Chowdhury, from Agrabad CGS Colony at around 1:30am.

Sajjad is an accused in eight criminal cases.

Grenade attack kills child, injures 16 in Assam

AP, Gauhati

A young man on a motorcycle tossed a hand grenade at people celebrating a major festival in India's northeast, killing an 8-year-old child and wounding 16 others, police said yesterday.

Police blamed the rebel United Liberation Front of Assam for the attack, and said they had killed one insurgent in a separate incident yesterday in the northeastern state of Assam.

Five policemen were among the injured in the grenade attack, which took place around midnight in Dhemaji, a town 550 kilometers (340 miles) north of Gauhati, the capital of Assam, said the state police chief, Deepak Narain Dutt.

The victims of the grenade attack were celebrating Durga Puja, an

important festival in eastern India. The attack occurred near a "pandal," a temporary structure set up to worship goddess Durga for her graciousness as well as her fearsome power.

All the injured were hospitalised, Dutt said.

While the rebels were not immediately available to comment on the attack, they have been fighting to carve out a homeland in Assam.

They accuse the federal government of exploiting the state's rich mineral resources and doing little for Assam's indigenous people, who are ethnically closer to the people of China and Myanmar than they are to other Indians.

The violence came days after the rebels pulled out of peace talks with the Indian government after New Delhi scrapped a cease-fire and resumed military operations.



Unruly garment workers vandalise a dozen of vehicles on the premises of a factory of Opex Group at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Kidnapped boy rescued in Ctg: 2 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rescued a minor boy and arrested two alleged kidnappers here in the port city yesterday.

The alleged kidnappers were brothers and identified as Md Kabir Hossain and Md Dulal Hossain, son of Ali Ashraf of Langakote in Comilla.

The rescued boy was identified as Mehedi Hasan, 7, son of Md

Nayeem of Biracha area of Brahmanbaria.

Sources said Kabir in the guise of an officer of detective police went to the house of Nayeem on September 30.

He took Mehedi to a local market in the name of buying some garments of his (Mehedi's) size for his nephew and kidnapped him.

Later, Kabir reportedly phoned Mehedi's parents demanding ransom of Tk 1 lakh for his release.

As the family members informed Rab of the incident, members of the elite force contacted the kidnappers on Sunday night when the latter told them to hand over the ransom through a courier service.

On information that the money was sent to Chittagong, Kabir went to withdraw it from the local office of the courier service at the city's Kazir Dewry area and was arrested by the Rab members, who were waiting there in disguise.

Acting on the confession of Kabir, the Rab members rescued Mehedi from a house near Zahur Hawkers Market area and arrested Dulal who stood guard on the victim at around 1:00am.

Both the alleged kidnappers and the victim are now under the custody at Rab Chittagong headquarters at Patenga.

The parents of the victim were informed of the rescue.



PHOTO: STAR

Chief Secretary to the Treasury of the UK Stephen Timms and British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury call on Sylhet city Mayor Badaruddin Ahmed Kamran at his office yesterday.

Dengue kills 14 in India, affects over 400

AP, New Delhi

Thousands of health workers in New Delhi went door to door yesterday spraying pesticides to stop the spread of dengue fever, a mosquito-borne disease that has killed 14 people in northern India in the past six weeks, officials said.

New Delhi's health minister, Yoganand Shastri, told reporters the

moves to stop the spread of dengue were aimed at keeping the outbreak from becoming an epidemic.

But if "the outbreak is not contained by Tuesday, we will declare it an epidemic," he told reporters.

Female Aedes mosquitoes transmit the disease, and symptoms include high fever, joint pain, headache and vomiting. It is fatal in rare cases.

Eleven of the deaths have been in New Delhi, Shastri said, while three other people died in Uttar Pradesh.

As a 3-year-old girl, Nisha Dubey, died of suspected dengue in a state-run village health centre on the outskirts of Lucknow on Sunday, her relatives mobbed the centre alleging that the death occurred because of a lack of medical attention.

"There were no doctors or paramedics present when we brought Nisha, who was running a high fever, to the health center. My daughter died waiting for treatment," RK Dubey told The Associated Press.

New Delhi is filled with pools of stagnating water where the insects breed - they can be found everywhere from well-kept parks to trash-strewn lots - and health workers on Monday sprayed pesticides and fumigated homes, offices and shops, said NK Yadav, New Delhi's municipal health officer.

Breeding season for the Aedes mosquito starts in August, as India's annual monsoon season begins to wind down.

"As of now 448 cases of dengue have been reported - 247 from New Delhi and 201 from Uttar Pradesh and Haryana states," Shastri said Sunday. Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are northern Indian states that border New Delhi.

Last year, authorities reported four fatalities among a total of 217 dengue fever cases across India.

This year's outbreak has also hit New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences, the country's premier state-run health institute. So far, 19 doctors and students have fallen ill with the disease and one has died.

2 electrocuted in Mymensingh

UNB, Mymensingh

Two people, including a schoolboy, were electrocuted at village Chakrampur in Trishal yesterday.

The dead were identified as Pradip, 35, and Rubel, 15.

Local people said Pradip first came into contact with a live electric wire on the premises of his house at about 11:00am. Hearing the screaming, Rubel came to save Pradip but he was also electrocuted. Both of them died on the spot.